



Fire Planning Unit Development Information

The objective of FPA is to model an efficient, cost-effective organization to implement fire management program objectives articulated in the Fire Management Plan. The Preparedness Module (FPA-PM) will specifically focus on modeling initial response to wildland fire. This first module will determine fire preparedness organizations to achieve land management objectives for alternative budget levels. At any budget level, it will identify an optimal mix of staff and equipment for multi-agency fire management areas to prepare for wildfire suppression response and wildland fire use, based on local fire occurrence, fuels, burning conditions, and values-to-be-protected.

FPA runs an analysis on an interagency, geographic area called a Fire Planning Unit (FPU). A FPU may consist of lands encompassed within several Fire Management Plans. Fire Planning Units are the geographic scope of the landscape defined for the fire program analysis. Fire Planning Units are scalable, and may be contiguous or non-contiguous. Fire Planning Units relate to any combination of administrative units or sub-units, and are not predefined by Agency administrative unit boundaries.

The purpose of this document is to provide general information about the formation of Fire Planning Units. While there are no hard and fast rules related to developing FPUs, there are landscape-scale attributes and characteristics in addition to management and operational considerations that inform managers in developing FPUs.

Considerations in forming Fire Planning Units include, but are not limited to:

Landscape-scale considerations

- Compatible land management goals and objectives and/or fire management objectives
- Adjacent, intermingled or proximate lands with potential partners
- Similar fuels conditions that require coordinated fuels treatments and/or suppression strategies
- Common watershed or other ecological boundaries

Management Considerations

- Common political and social issues (wildland-urban interface, smoke management, etc.)
- Meets Congressional/OMB intent for interagency fire planning
 - Includes small units with little local fire capability
 - Interagency partnerships, wherever feasible, rather than stand-alone units
 - Avoid fragmentation and possible duplication of initial response capability
- Good communication among local line officers and their fire and resource staffs
- History of working together on land management issues
- Considers Tribal, state and local cooperative relationships

Operational Considerations

- Existing interagency cooperative agreements/mutual aid zones
- Participation in shared dispatch centers serving a common geographic area
- Common operation centers (Guard Stations, Fire Stations, Field Stations)
- Currently sharing or potential for sharing initial response resources
- Adjacent units with similar or common fuels and/or wildland fire use strategies
- Units with the potential to contribute during FPA Phase II's analysis of fuels, extended attack, prevention and education, etc.

The following attributes should not be a deterrent to FPU development

- Age or status of Land/Resource Management Plan (L/RMP)
- Age or status of Fire Management Plan (FMP)
- Lack of current formal agreements
- Lack of fire occurrence data
- Size of unit/sub-unit (i.e. small units with little or no fire occurrence may still participate in FPU)
- Lack of suppression resources
- Lack of unit GIS information
- Lack of “designated” agency fire planners
- Possible federal partners outside the five wildland fire agencies (DOE, BOR, COE, DOD)
- Geographically isolated from other federal partners (consider adjacent state and local cooperators in your analysis)

Size of an FPU:

There is no one answer for what is an appropriate scale for a Fire Planning Unit. However, there are some implications of small scale versus large scale to consider:

- Are your current resources justified on a single local unit or based on a combined interagency workload?
- What is the practical span of administrative control for the proposed management structure required for this new organization?
- Is the group too large to reasonably schedule meetings that all partners could attend?
- What is the overall program workload and complexity when considering all fire management activities (i.e. prescribed fire, mechanical fuels treatments, etc.)
- There may be system limitations as to workloads that can be analyzed, such as:
 - all of California may have a workload that precludes making the entire state an FPU, but
 - it may be feasible to combine Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island into a FPU.

Contact Information:

Questions, concerns and feedback regarding FPU development may be directed to the FPA Implementation Coordination Group (ICG).

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